

Introduction

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906) was one of the most prolific and versatile writers in American literary history. When he died five months before his thirty-fourth birthday, Dunbar had published four novels, four books of short stories, fourteen books of poetry, and numerous songs, dramatic works, short stories, poems, and essays in several American periodicals. At the time of his death, Dunbar was the greatest African American literary artist the nation had ever seen. The complexity of Dunbar's oeuvre and the range of his professional accomplishments should have led, in the century after his death, to commensurately rich and sophisticated critical approaches to his life and work.

In retrospect, that has not been the case. Scholars most often connect Dunbar's legacy to two books of poems he published in 1896, *Majors and Minors* and *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, because William Dean Howells, the so-called Dean of American Letters, wrote a laudatory review of the former in the June 27, 1896, issue of *Harper's Weekly* and adapted that review for the introduction he wrote for the latter. In the review, Howells praises *Majors and Minors* and, in effect, puts Dunbar on the mainstream literary map of America. Howells presents a special "negro poet" to readers in the United States and around the world, a Negro poet whose "negro pieces . . . are of like impulse and inspiration with the work of [Robert] Burns when he was most Burns, when he was most Scotch, when he was most peasant," and who, like Burns, "was least himself [when] he wrote literary English" (630). Howells's review specified Dunbar's niche in American letters as the "first man of his color to study his race objectively, to analyze it to himself, and then to represent it in art as he felt it and found it to be; to represent it humorously, yet tenderly, and above all so faithfully that we know the portrait to be undeniably like." For Howells, it was Dunbar's supposedly objective portrayal of African Americans speaking in dialect that made his representations both faithful and artistic.

Although Howells wrote with the best of intentions, Dunbar's supposed objective analysis of African American life became, for several contemporaneous literary critics and commercial marketplaces, the standard for determining the realistic nature and aesthetic value of "blackness" in literature. Eventually, this representational category limited Dunbar's own ability to deviate from the accepted protocols of African American literature, and subsequently reduced the complexity of his legacy to a rigid dichotomy. It has been argued that Dunbar was torn between, on the one hand, fulfilling certain cultural conventions of minstrelsy in order to make money and appease literary critics, and, on the other, heeding personal impulses to write poetry in the style of the Romantics. Dunbar was torn, in other words, between selling out to a racist market for blackface humor and dialect and practicing a sort of literary assimilationism that in itself was racist, because it privileged traditionally white-authored poetry as the best that Western literature had

to offer. Scholars—and, indirectly, classroom teachers and students—have continued to frame their studies of Dunbar in terms of such poetic ambivalence, even when the literary text in question is not Dunbar’s poetry. In short, the binary between informal and formal English into which Dunbar’s poetry has often been put has incorrectly dictated the scholarly interpretations of his fiction. Consequently, we tend to come away with rather limited conceptual and generic approaches to Dunbar’s literary life and legacy.¹

The Complete Stories of Paul Laurence Dunbar addresses this tendency by focusing on Dunbar’s gifts as a writer of short fiction. The collection reprints stories by Dunbar that have already appeared in previous editions as well as those that have remained out of print from their initial publication until now. The first section comprises the collected stories of Dunbar, reprinting the four collections of short stories he published during his lifetime: *Folks from Dixie* (1898), *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories* (1900), *In Old Plantation Days* (1903), and *The Heart of Happy Hollow* (1904).² The second section comprises the uncollected stories—stories Dunbar did not include in his published collections.³ Included in this second section are four dialect stories that Dunbar serialized in the *New York Journal and Advertiser* in 1897 and that are reprinted for the first time in our collection; and “Ohio Pastorals,” five stories that Dunbar serialized in *Lippincott’s Magazine* in 1901.

In the past, Dunbar’s short fiction has come across as fragmented partially because it appeared in several competing anthologies of American literature and collections of Dunbar’s writings.⁴ Consequently, these anthologies and collections have made it rather difficult to make the necessary thematic connections between and among Dunbar’s short stories. These books have also misrepresented Dunbar’s short stories as only a minor part of his literary output, when in fact they constituted an important aspect of his experimentations with literary form. We can even go so far to assert that Dunbar’s short stories reflect his most significant and sustained engagement with the literary conventions that ultimately frustrated his efforts at writing poetry, the novel, and plays. By reprinting 103 stories that Dunbar published between 1890 and 1905,⁵ and by providing an editorial introduction that identifies the main themes and implications, *The Complete Stories of Paul Laurence Dunbar* makes Dunbar’s entire oeuvre of short fiction available in one convenient and definitive volume for the first time.

I

Paul Laurence Dunbar was all too aware of the limitations William Dean Howells’s review of *Majors and Minors* imposed on his abilities as a literary artist. In a letter to a friend on March 15, 1897, Dunbar observes:

One critic says a thing and the rest hasten to say the same thing, in many instances using the identical words. I see now very clearly that Mr. Howells has done me ir-

revocable harm in the dictum he laid down regarding my dialect verse. I am afraid that it will even influence English criticism, although what notices I have here have shown a different trend. (73)

Howells's prescriptions concerning Dunbar's dialect poetry conditioned the ways in which other critics at the time and later would read his work. Critics' repetition of "identical words" and similar sentiments about Dunbar's writing not only indicated the value of his work in the public sphere but also restricted his ability to address social issues in his writing. As he noted earlier in the letter: "I am so glad also that you too can see and appreciate the utter hollowness of the most of American book criticism" (73). Unfortunately for Dunbar, this "hollowness" did matter to the general reading public. Dunbar realized the adverse effect of Howells's "dictums" only when it was too late to do anything about it.

In part, Dunbar's apprehension concerned the racial politics of American literary culture. Realism, ascendant as a literary practice and tradition in the 1890s, advocated the presentation of personal knowledge as the basis for fictional representation. In the case of African American authors, however, this personal knowledge also had to conform to the stereotypical norms that had already been institutionalized by the tenets of realism. As an anonymous literary review from the *Bookman* in September 1896 attested, "Mr. Dunbar, as his pleasing, manly, and not unrefined face shows, is a poet of the African race; and this novel and suggestive fact at once places his work upon a peculiar footing of interest, of study, and of appreciative welcome" (19). Dunbar's poetry was a "welcome" addition to American literature, but his race placed "his work upon a peculiar footing" in comparison to his Anglo-American contemporaries. The novelty of race lent significance to Dunbar's poetry for this reviewer. If Dunbar had been a white man, then "he would have received little or no consideration in a hurried weighing of the mass of contemporary verse" (19). Both Howells and the anonymous reviewer directly linked Dunbar's role in the literary realm to his racial or ethnic background. The aesthetic categories used to evaluate his writing were explicitly connected to his identity as an African American.

While critics positioned Dunbar's poetry in relation to his identity, his first three novels—*The Uncalled* (1898), *The Love of Landry* (1900), and *The Fanatics* (1901)—were criticized for their departure from the traditionally accepted subject matter of African American authors. Dunbar's decision to use what critics perceived to be white characters in his first three novels did not correspond with cultural expectations. Grace Isabel Colbron's *Bookman* review of *The Uncalled* asserts:

It is therefore no belittling of the true literary value of Paul Dunbar's earlier work, his exquisite poems, and the sketches in *Folks from Dixie*, to say that they touched us so deeply because they gave us what we asked for—the glow of a warm heart thrown on a little and hitherto almost unknown corner of our country's many-sided life. When this promising poet, from whom we expected work of increasing

power along the same lines, forsakes his own people, and gives us pictures of the life of the white inhabitants of an Ohio town, he challenges us to judge him without the plea of his especial fitness for the work. [. . . A]s Mr. Dunbar finds for his hero at last the vocation for which he is truly “called,” so he himself should return to those lines along which, as we have already indicated, lie his best chances of actual, not relative success. (339, 341)⁶

The review of *The Love of Landry* in the *New York Times* notes that “the story is more conventional than Mr. Dunbar’s former work” before moving on to observe that “it is to be hoped Mr. Dunbar will not forsake his own province for one which he must share with so many other writers of romance” (902). Similarly, the anonymous reviewer of *The Love of Landry* for the *Bookman* states that “[i]t is quite natural that Mr. Dunbar should have certain limitations when he endeavours to portray the characters of those not of his own race” (512). Arguably, these critics were celebrating the distinctive perspective available to Dunbar as an African American author. It is more likely, however, that the remonstrance to remain in “his own province” of representational subject matter, a province “he was so eminently fitted” to fulfill (Colbron, 338–39), was more a criticism than a compliment.

By contrast, Dunbar’s short fiction did not elicit such lukewarm reviews—quite the opposite, as we shall discuss later. That few scholars have examined this body of work—as opposed to his poetry and his fourth novel, *The Sport of the Gods* (1902)—means that the critical connections between Dunbar’s short stories and the rest of his oeuvre remain underdeveloped. These connections, when illuminated, deepen and broaden our understanding of Dunbar’s literary strategies and goals, particularly in the context of the short story form. These connections also enable us to diversify the textual, historical, cultural, and sociological approaches that can be applied to Dunbar’s work. A significant addition to American letters at the turn of the twentieth century, Dunbar’s short stories offer keen insight into American race relations as well as the problems African Americans faced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Literary fame distinguished Dunbar’s own relationship to the short story, as opposed to how it functioned for other African American authors at the turn of the twentieth century, such as Charles Chesnutt, Pauline Hopkins, and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. Although Dunbar was still bound by the period’s representational norms for African Americans in fiction, his preeminence allowed him to more liberally experiment with different literary forms and themes. This latitude is most evident in his short fiction, where his most serious political interventions occur. Dunbar’s collections of short stories contain an eclectic mix of literary strategies. They include stories that run from the traditional nostalgic plantation narrative extolling the virtues of humble and faithful slaves, to stories that more directly question the lack of cultural-national citizenship accorded to African Americans. In general, Dunbar complicates the simplistic caricatures of African Americans at the turn of the century, revealing the nuances of racial identity and reflecting the elaborate and provocative structure of America’s racial landscape.

Dunbar's short stories enabled him to escape the socially compromised iconography, themes, and discourse of racial representation. Although the short story made use of the same kind of racial stereotypes found in American novels or poetry, its widely accepted designation as entertaining and apolitical provided a smoke-screen for Dunbar's own experimentation with literary form and racial politics. We need to keep in mind that the short story was considered a genre "lower" than the novel in the period, and critical peer reviews in periodicals focused on providing authors the feedback required for improving their stories or their literary skills in general. Dunbar capitalized on the period's conception of the genre as literary training ground for authors in order to interrogate the pastoral boundaries, vis-à-vis the slave plantation, that circumscribed representations of blacks in American fiction.

Throughout his collections Dunbar interspersed so-called plantation stories that either conformed to or deviated from the pastoral standards by which African Americans were often viewed. First, there are the stories that conform to pastoral definitions of African American life. These are the stories that too readily lend themselves to the traditional critical interpretation of Dunbar as merely pandering to white expectations of blacks.⁷ At the same time, there are also stories that undermine the pastoral logic used to depict African Americans.⁸ These stories seemingly adhere to the public stereotypes of African Americans, but, upon closer examination, the black characters respond to racism and racial prejudice in active and progressive ways.

In addition to the plantation stories, there are stories by Dunbar that expand the representations of African Americans. For example, "Little Africa" stories set in Dalesford, Ohio, break from the traditional pastoral images of African Americans.⁹ Several stories set in other urban areas such as the tenements of New York and Washington, D.C., present the positive abilities of African Americans while modifying the protocols of local color.¹⁰ Occasionally, such stories perpetuate the racial stereotypes of the period; however, they also rethink the traditional literary location of African Americans within the rural South.¹¹ Presenting African American characters as an integral component of larger urban centers allowed Dunbar to critique in subtle ways the mores that configured African American identity and the politics of race in American society.

Dunbar's apparent inconsistency—his tendency toward stereotypical literary depictions, on the one hand, and his incorporation here and there of more serious racial-political discourse, on the other—points to his personal and professional obligations to the commercial marketplace for African American literature. Peter Revell has suggested that Dunbar's private arrangements in about 1898 with the editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* (George Horace Lorimer) to submit literary material compelled him to resort to the most publishable or marketable means of African American characterization in the 1890s: minstrelsy (Revell, 108). This agreement resulted in his third collection, *In Old Plantation Days*, which he dedicated to this editor and which, as we shall soon see, resumes the literary strategies of *The Strength of Gideon*. By this time, both critical acclaim and commercial

success had already begun to reward the poet's command of what James Weldon Johnson called minstrel "humor and pathos" (41). Such qualities were also attributed to the so-called plantation tradition of postbellum Anglo-American literature, which tended to romanticize, sentimentalize, and thereby recuperate nostalgia for the inequitable race relations that thrived in the Old South.¹² To an extent, Dunbar fell onto his own sword in reintroducing some of the tradition's formulaic themes with his racially "authentic" pen—namely, the orthography of black dialect, racial stereotypes, and generally conciliatory interracial relationships. A victim of his own success, he boxed himself into a literary paradigm that overshadowed the diversity of his literary skills and racial-political thought while offering him the best means of earning money. While Dunbar accepted these terms for the sake of achieving financial security, he was more proactive and subtle about inserting his own political views than many critics, then and since, have given him credit for.

One skill overshadowed is his experimentation with white narrators and characters in his short fiction—an experimentation more liberal, in fact, than that found in his novels.¹³ By probing the relationships between the races in more critical depth than perhaps any other author of his era, Dunbar uncovers the specific tensions that existed between whites and blacks and that resulted from inequities in social power. For example, Dr. Melville, Dunbar's white narrator in "The Lynching of Jube Benson," contained in *The Heart of Happy Hollow*, recognizes too late his complicity with the tenets of white supremacy. Further, Dunbar clearly posits that whites and blacks are influenced by the same set of cultural forces. Also in that collection, "The Promoter" depicts how Mr. Buford learns dubious business practices from his interactions with whites: "Truly he had profited by the examples of the white men for whom he had so long acted as messenger and factotum."

Finally, there are a good number of stories that test the political limitations African Americans faced while dealing with white society.¹⁴ Dunbar's decision about where to place such stories within the collections demonstrates his conscious effort to soften those stories' inherently scathing critiques of the values within or imposed on African American life and of those underwriting black-white race relations. The frontloading of stereotypical stories in *The Strength of Gideon*, for example, belies the subtle racial-political critiques and depictions of African Americans that appear thereafter in the collection. Indeed, such nuanced stories defy the blanket praise of the stereotypes that characterize both the immediate reviews of *The Strength of Gideon* and the criticism of Dunbar's short fiction in subsequent literary history. Four of the sixteen reviews that appeared in U.S. periodicals commended Dunbar's realistic "command of humor and pathos."¹⁵ But hardly any noticed how, much less considered why, certain stories by Dunbar document the social, economic, and political power that whites held over blacks in U.S. society. Within this context of pseudodocumentary realism, Dunbar complicates not only the conventions of racial representation in literature, but also the portrayal of his stories as merely selling out to the critics and the marketplace.

II

A closer look at the individual collections shows how Dunbar combined his literary strategies. Dunbar's first collection of stories, *Folks from Dixie*, was published in 1898, earlier in the same year that his first novel, *The Uncalled*, came out. Both appeared under the imprint of Dodd, Mead and Company. Dunbar dedicated *Folks from Dixie* to Henry A. Tobey, a longtime friend and supporter; it was Tobey who had helped finance the publication of first *Oak and Ivy* and later *Majors and Minors*, and it was also Tobey who suggested that Dunbar send a copy of *Majors and Minors* to James Herne, a well-known actor who was performing in Toledo. Herne "read the book, wrote enthusiastically to Dunbar, and passed the book on to William Dean Howells" (Revell, 45). The rest, as they say, was history.

Folks from Dixie contains twelve stories. One of them, "Anner 'Lizer's Stumblin' Block," had been published in the May 1895 *Independent*, and two others were published as the collection was in press: "The Deliberation of Mr. Dunkin" in the April 1898 *Cosmopolitan* and "A Family Feud" in the April 1898 *Outlook*. The collection was Dunbar's first extended experiment with the short story form; his earlier published stories were mostly attempts to develop his prose-writing abilities.¹⁶ *Folks from Dixie* presents one of Dunbar's initial attempts to break out of the "objective" literary model that Howells's review had created for him.

The majority of the stories in *Folks from Dixie* deal with plantation settings and themes. Only three, "Anner 'Lizer's Stumblin' Block," "A Family Feud," and "The Intervention of Peter," are set in the pre-Civil War period. But of the first nine stories, all except "Jimsella" are set in the rural South. The first story, "Anner 'Lizer's Stumblin' Block," is a traditional plantation story narrating Anner 'Lizer's struggles to keep both her faith and her man. The second story, "The Ordeal at Mt. Hope," is also set in the rural South, but in the postbellum period. It chronicles Reverend Howard Dokesbury's attempts to bring change to the town of Mt. Hope. Dokesbury, recently sent to Mt. Hope from his Northern college, notes that the "environment" of the town is the largest force that he has to combat in helping to improve the lot of his fellow African Americans. Thinking of the proper course of action required to help Elias, the son of the couple he is staying with, Dokesbury observes:

He could not talk to Elias. He could not lecture him. He would only be dashing his words against the accumulated evil of years of bondage as the ripples of a summer sea beat against a stone wall. It was not the wickedness of this boy he was fighting or even the wrongdoing of Mt. Hope. It was the aggregation of the evils of the fathers, the grandfathers, the masters and mistresses of these people. Against this what could talk avail?

Instead, Dokesbury realizes that he must use his own actions to inspire the changes that he desires. Dokesbury's success in awakening Mt. Hope points to the transformation African Americans can accomplish when they are given not only something

to aspire to but the practical means to achieve it. Dunbar's story takes a productive slant on a traditionally negative topic—black Southern poverty—and invests it with a positive outcome. His story posits an affirmative vision for his white readers while also giving them a clear sense that the social environment and the tangible past have shaped and influenced Southern blacks in ways that need to be acknowledged. After “The Ordeal at Mt. Hope,” Dunbar includes two more post-bellum plantation stories in “The Colonel's Awakening” and “The Trial Sermons on Bull-Skin” before turning to the crowded urban space of New York City in “Jimsella.”

“Jimsella” builds on the sentiments of “The Ordeal at Mt. Hope.” Mandy Mason, the story's main protagonist, struggles with the different living conditions presented in the urban North: “here it was all very different: one room in a crowded tenement house, and the necessity of grinding day after day to keep the wolf—a very terrible and ravenous wolf—from the door.” However, as the overriding narrative voice makes clear, it is not Mandy's “inherent” laziness or lack of trying that makes her present conditions difficult; she is, after all, “only a simple, honest countrywoman.” Instead, it is the environment that has shaped Mandy in the rural South. Before she travels to the North with Jim, “the first twenty years of her life conditions had not taught her the necessity of thrift.” Mandy and Jim struggle to survive, especially when Jim takes to “wandering.” Hope is rekindled with the birth of their child, Jimsella. Not only does the arrival of the child stop Jim's wandering ways; both parents find the hope and courage that they lacked at the beginning of the story. Moreover, Dunbar frames the story around a strong black female character; it is Mandy's attempt to struggle on after Jim's initial absence that creates the possibility for a positive conclusion. The next four stories, however, use the “humor and pathos” noted by contemporary reviewers. “Mt. Pisgah's Christmas 'Possum,” “A Family Feud,” “Aunt Mandy's Investment,” and “The Intervention of Peter” follow the more traditional use of minstrel-like black characters that are overly comical or overly faithful to whites.

Dunbar saves his most interesting stories for the end of the collection. After having appealed to the racist sensibilities of his white readers, Dunbar offers two stories, “Nelse Hatton's Vengeance” and “At Shaft II,” as his most pointed commentary on the social conditions that African Americans faced. “Nelse Hatton's Vengeance” concerns an industrious and successful ex-slave who becomes the “soundest and most highly respected” citizen of Dexter, Ohio. Nelse lives in an all-white neighborhood in one of the nicest houses, earning the respect of his white neighbors. The title comes into play when a vagrant who asks Nelse for a meal turns out to be Nelse's former childhood master. Instead of acting out his desired revenge on his former master, Nelse responds with sympathy and kindness. Nelse's actions could be read as another of Dunbar's capitulations to African American servility, but Nelse does express a larger racial anger over his earlier treatment, and his former master acknowledges the complaints. Nelse's ability to act humanely toward those who have previously wronged him suggests that reconciliation between whites and blacks is possible if both are willing to meet halfway.

The next story, “At Shaft 11,” deals with labor agitation in a mining town in West Virginia. When black workers take over for striking whites, violence between the two groups ensues. Only the actions of white protagonist Jason Andrews prevent more bloodshed. While the story offers a seemingly negative portrayal of labor issues, Dunbar highlights the necessity of establishing equal rights for blacks before workers’ rights can be resolved. Andrews’s decision to stand up for the black workers and against the unionist activities of his former fellow workers is grounded in these sentiments. As he tells the white owners of the mine, “I am with you as long as you are in the right.” Dunbar’s story mediates the interactions between whites and blacks in a productive and judicious manner. At the conclusion of the story, whites and blacks continue to work together at the mine.

Dunbar’s portrayal of the white labor agitator in “At Shaft 11” as “so perfectly plausible, so smooth, and so clear,” takes on a larger meaning when juxtaposed with the description of Mr. Ruggles, a black confidence man in “Aunt Mandy’s Investment.” Ruggles’s motto is “It is better to be plausible than right,” and as the narrator informs us, “[h]e was seldom right, but he was always plausible.” The tensions between plausibility and being “right” operate in both stories. Dunbar uses the abuses of plausibility between blacks to construct a humorous conclusion in “Aunt Mandy’s Investment,” but in “At Shaft 11” the plausibility of whites leads to violence against blacks. In sum, blacks and whites are equally guilty of using misleading rhetoric to accomplish individual goals. While not an explicit point of either story, such careful intertextual connections point out how Dunbar used his collections to intervene in the larger public discussions about the social relationships between blacks and whites. Curiously, Dunbar concludes the collection with “The Deliberation of Mr. Dunkin,” a story set in Miltonville, Kentucky, that unthreateningly—that is, humorously—narrates Mr. Dunkin’s courting of the town’s new schoolteacher.

Several other intertextual threads and themes, often introduced as sly narrative asides, critique the perceived roles of blacks in American life. One of the more subtle examples refers to the negative representation of blacks in the popular press. In “The Ordeal at Mt. Hope,” Rev. Howard Dokesbury observes “a group of idle Negroes exchanging rude badinage with their white counterparts across the street.” The narrator then provides the following gloss of this exchange: “After a while this bantering interchange would grow more keen and personal, a free-for-all friendly fight would follow, and the newspaper correspondent in that section would write it up as a ‘race war.’” The sensationalized representation of the “free-for-all friendly fight” as a “race war” by the “newspaper correspondent” points to the ways in which press representations exacerbated the tensions between whites and blacks in ways that disproportionately affected blacks.

In “Nelse Hatton’s Vengeance,” Dunbar also touches on the hackneyed use of literary convention. Describing Nelse Hatton’s living room, the narrator observes: “If this story were chronicling the doings of some fanciful Negro, or some really rude plantation hand, it might be said that the ‘front room was filled with a conglomeration of cheap but pretentious furniture, and the walls covered with gaudy

prints’—this seems to be the usual phrase. But in it the chronicler too often forgets how many Negroes were house-servants, and from close contact with their master’s families imbibed aristocratic notions and quiet but elegant tastes.” Here, the narrator calls attention to the specific distinctions that are being expressed in the text between “the chronicler” who uses “the traditional phrase” and the narrator who knows better than to make such gross overgeneralizations. Further, in drawing social and economic distinctions between Nelse, on the one hand, and “some fanciful Negro, or some really rude plantation hand,” on the other, the narrator also documents the actual differences from stereotypical norms that Nelse represents.

Reviews of *Folks from Dixie* were mostly favorable. Critics read Dunbar’s short stories through the lens of Howells’s review, some going so far as to quote Howells directly. As the anonymous reviewer for the *New York Times* notes, “[Dunbar] has treated the negro ‘objectively,’ as Mr. Howells says, with perfect truth and sympathy, but without a trace of sentimentality” (397). Dunbar’s racial identity was also a topic of discussion. George Preston observes that “the work is notable as the first expression in national prose fiction of the inner life of the American negro” (348). The anonymous reviewer in the *Independent* states that “his insight into negro character is refreshingly clear, while his way of putting things avoids in most places the conventional stumbling-blocks of so-called ‘dialect’ writers” (726). Reviewers generally responded most positively to the humorous stories. The review in the *Independent* proclaims, “[T]here is pathos in some of them; but we like the humor better” (726), while the review in *Outlook* asserts that Dunbar “has humor in abundance, freshness of style, and sympathy of the best and truest” (86). The connections made in these reviews between race, “objectivity,” and humor in Dunbar’s stories reiterate the norms used to define African Americans in literature and in the larger public sphere.

However, critics singled out three stories: “The Ordeal at Mt. Hope,” “Jimsella,” and “Nelse Hatton’s Vengeance.” George Preston begins his comments on “The Ordeal at Mt. Hope” by reinforcing racist beliefs about blacks, bemoaning the “beautiful maternity of the grotesque black mother and the grim dignity of the repulsive black father” (348). But he recognizes Dunbar’s portrayal of the influence of environment. Preston notes that Dokesbury’s “ordeal is the struggle to raise his people” from “the aggregation of the evils done by the fathers, the grandfathers, the masters and mistresses of these people.” Preston also favorably comments on “Jimsella,” calling it an example of “the common destiny of humanity” (349). While he is overly sentimental in his observations, lamenting that the characters have drifted “from a plantation home of comparative comfort to the rigorous poverty of a New York tenement,” he does acknowledge that the conclusion strikes a “universal” note. Finally, the review in the *Critic* observes that “light is thrown on the relations of the two races, black and white” (413) in “Nelse Hatton’s Vengeance,” while the reviewer from the *New York Times* calls the story “nobly conceived” (397). The critical response to these three stories points out that Dunbar’s narrative strategies were having their intended effects. Humor and race were

the main features that critics emphasized, but some also observed that more was going on in his collection. Taken as a whole, Dunbar's first collection was both a success and a failure. While his work was still marked by the terms that Howells had set out for his poetry, Dunbar did get some critics to look beyond the humorous facade of his initial stories. The stereotypical African American characters and idyllic settings found in Dunbar's collection appealed to "a huge audience for a literature of escape into a pre-Civil War, exotic South that, all but 'lost,' was now the object of nostalgia" in the postbellum decades (Blight, 211). Several of Dunbar's stories, however, defy this literary paradigm, which remained popular at the turn of the century, by illustrating the complexity of race relations in certain environments.

In the year following publication of these reviews of *Folks from Dixie*, Dunbar was editing the proofs of his second book of short stories, *The Strength of Gideon*, and writing *The Love of Landry*, a novel based on the medical trip he took to Colorado in late 1898 to recover from tuberculosis. The two books differed remarkably in both their literary nature and their public reception, analogous to the difference between *Folks from Dixie* and *The Uncalled*. Both *Folks from Dixie* and *The Strength of Gideon* are collections of short stories focusing on the trials and tribulations of African America. By contrast, both *The Uncalled* and *The Love of Landry* are novels that avoid any sustained discussion of this subject, focusing respectively on the local color of the Midwest (Ohio) and the West (Colorado). Although the New York-based publisher, Dodd, Mead and Company, released all four books with comparable marketing engines, *Folks from Dixie* outsold *The Uncalled*, and more critics praised *The Strength of Gideon* than *The Love of Landry*.¹⁷

There is a plausible explanation for the difference in the critical and public receptions of *Folks from Dixie* and *The Strength of Gideon*, on the one hand, and *The Uncalled* and *The Love of Landry*, on the other. The two books of short stories met the public expectation that African American literature should, at the very minimum, venture a realistic representation of African American life, and at its very best, appear to inscribe this representation within the cultural politics of minstrelsy. Comprising twenty stories that cover the antebellum period, *The Strength of Gideon*, like *Folks from Dixie*, concentrates mostly on African Americans in the South, but also includes stories about those who were trying to navigate the urban terrains and free societies of the Northeast. The title story captures the political-ideological tension between the African American accommodation of white privilege and the assertion among slaves of racial equality in spite of this privilege.

Gideon, a devoutly religious slave, has developed unwavering commitments to his master, his own wife, and his race. But when the master asks Gideon to promise to help take care of the "women folks" on the plantation, the slave experiences a crisis of loyalty. The prospect of emancipation inspires the slaves on the plantation, including Gideon's wife, to consider fleeing Northward and securing their own freedom. In the face of this smoldering resistance to the status quo, Gideon

demonstrates the “strength” to remain faithful to his promise. Implicit in this loyalty is Gideon’s belief that the conditions of slavery, however problematic, have not yet proven so unbearable as to warrant his own flight.

“Viney’s Free Papers” echoes “The Strength of Gideon.” Ben Raymond is a slave who secures the manumission paperwork for his wife, Viney, who then threatens to leave him when he resists the idea of achieving freedom in the North. Many manumitted slaves were traveling to the North, but if freedom could not be experienced in the South, where the slaves were born and reared, Ben argued, it should not be experienced at all. Again, an unshakable fidelity to the family heritage and social stability of slavery trumps the desire for freedom. This story is not new in African American literary history; Booker T. Washington has told it.¹⁸ The appearance of this kind of story in *The Strength of Gideon*, as opposed to the more revolutionary and volatile narrative of slave insurrection (such as Nat Turner’s) to secure freedom, certainly could have impressed on readers in Dunbar’s era a highly conciliatory, if unbalanced, picture of slave life. Humorous punch lines in the stories of *The Strength of Gideon*, of course, encourage readers knowledgeable about African American history to cast a doubtful eye on this entertaining picture of racial conciliation. But Dunbar’s overt catering to accommodationist or gradualist sensibilities—that is, the doctrines of accommodating white privilege and of advocating a gradual approach to racial equality—betrays the more skeptical stance he consistently held in his nonfictional essays about racial injustice and the importance of expeditious African American intellectual and cultural progress, or racial uplift.¹⁹

Despite probably boosting the critical and commercial success of *The Strength of Gideon*, reviews of the collection reduce its complexity. They are consistent with the longstanding critical reputation of the volume as a formulaic compendium of “plantation” stories and of its author as a novice at prose.²⁰ Almost all the reviews laud the book’s realistic depictions of African Americans: the stories express “the character, feeling and sentiment of the southern darkey.” The “plantation tales show the Negro in his truest light—fervid, credulous, full of rich, unconscious humor; lazy sometimes, but capable of dog-like faithfulness.” And the stories “are correct reflections of the Negro dialect and habits and thoughts of the southern darkey” (qtd. in Metcalf, 136–38).²¹ The interspersed throughout the book of E. W. Kemble’s caricatures of the African Americans featured in the stories certainly contributed to such impressions.

A closer look at *The Strength of Gideon* reveals that most of these reviews miss crucial indications of Dunbar’s resistance to pastoral and minstrel imagery. Only one review, however uneven, demonstrates an understanding of the complexity of Dunbar’s literary project and his imagination of a multifaceted white audience. Appearing in the *New York Times* (May 19, 1900), the review states that the stories of *The Strength of Gideon*

will be read with interest we can hardly doubt. That they will awaken antagonism in some quarters is equally certain. They bid strongly for sympathy for the col-

ored man in his struggle with the conditions which freedom has imposed upon him, and for that very reason they will evoke nothing but growls from that still considerable class of persons who cannot see anything good in a “nigger.”

Indeed, it is at this class that the stories are written. Mr. Dunbar is most influential when he is engaged in telling something which goes to show that the negro cannot make the battle of life as a free man except in the face of social disabilities which affect him at every step. He cannot hope to get such employment as a white man of similar education and ability, simply because the white man conceives the permission of such employment as recognizing a social equality. (324)

By treating the more overt signs of racism, “The Tragedy at Three Forks,” for example, indeed shows those “social disabilities” which affect African Americans. The story revolves around white mob violence and the consequent lynching of two Negroes prematurely accused of burning a respected white family out of its home. Several other stories in *The Strength of Gideon* portray African American resilience and perseverance in the face of social and cultural difficulties. In “The Ingrate,” a story recalling the centrality of literacy to securing freedom in the antebellum slave narrative, a boy teaches himself to read while serving as an accountant for his master. Eventually he runs away, and his literacy qualifies him for the position of Union army sergeant during the Civil War. “The Finish of Patsy Barnes,” furthermore, concerns a boy who learns to tend and ride race horses, despite the oppression of blacks in the racing industry, in order to pay for the care of his sick mother. Finally, “Silas Jackson” follows the journey of a Southern country boy to a faraway aristocratic hotel and resort where, through hard work and humility, he “refines” his interpersonal and verbal skills and ascends to a managerial position. He later volunteers as leading tenor of the hotel’s quartet, traveling to Northern cities to perform, but eventually his singing talents decline and he returns to his home to persevere as a field worker. Dunbar’s collection also features more educated African Americans struggling to understand U.S. social, political, and legal strategies of racial uplift, such as those in “One Man’s Fortunes,” “Mr. Cornelius Johnson, Office-Seeker,” “A Mess of Pottage,” and “A Council of State.”

These and other stories in *The Strength of Gideon* focus on the lives of African American men, but a few other stories offer notable portrayals of comparably strong and fearless African American women, a theme Dunbar would accentuate in *In Old Plantation Days*. “The Case of ‘Ca’line” displays a “kitchen monologue” in which a servant openly criticizes her master and mistress’s timid disenchantment with her work around the house. This was the humorous story that Dunbar frequently read to audiences when he toured the country (Cunningham, 201). The namesake of “Mammy Peggy’s Pride,” “a typical mammy of the old south,” overcomes her residential pride to help consummate a rather complex courtship between her mistress, distraught over selling their homestead, and the young gentleman who bought it. This nuanced characterization, along with those of other African Americans in *The Strength of Gideon*, indicates Dunbar’s constant negotiation of the literary politics of racial representation, even if only to serve as the backdrop to

stories about folk-religious practices in the black church or about the moral and philosophical crises whites faced as they grappled with the question of slavery.²²

The title of *In Old Plantation Days*, published three years after *The Strength of Gideon*, captures the generic limitations within which Dunbar wrote. According to some scholars, the collection represents one of his “chief” contributions to the plantation tradition of American literature (Brawley, 96; Revell, 108). Indeed, the collection of twenty-five stories revisits several of the same formulaic literary strategies and themes that entertained white readers of *Folks from Dixie* and *The Strength of Gideon*. But *In Old Plantation Days* differs from these collections in two main respects, one organizational and the other thematic. First, most of the stories are set on one specific plantation, that of Stuart Mordaunt, and the geographic restriction to the Mordaunt plantation lends organizational coherence to the collection. Mordaunt is a master often kindhearted and open-minded toward his family and slaves, and these traits help nurture a plantation atmosphere in which blacks and whites generally get along, respect one another, and form a tight social unit. *In Old Plantation Days* covers a variety of topics, including the jolly interactions between and among masters and slaves, the social role of conjure, and the power of music. The cameo appearances of protagonists and the recurrence throughout the stories of geographic, social, cultural, and religious markers facilitate transitions from one story to the next.²³

The second unique feature of *In Old Plantation Days* is its attention to the gender politics of the slave community, especially the responsibilities and respectability of black women as they keep plantation life stable and functional for its residents. The opening story, “Aunt Tempe’s Triumph,” captures the degree of assertiveness, if not stereotypical sassiness, that the black women in the volume tend to express toward their black male counterparts or even toward their masters and mistresses. Similar in its argumentative nature to “The Case of ‘Ca’line” in *The Strength of Gideon*, “Aunt Tempe’s Triumph” is framed by Aunt Tempe’s willingness to debate Mordaunt on whether she, the mammy of his daughter, deserves more than he does the traditional right to “give her away” in her upcoming wedding—a role customarily fulfilled by the bride’s father. Despite Aunt Tempe’s reputed skill in intimidating other slaves or manipulating Mordaunt and his family until she gets her own way, he does not give in. Ultimately, she intervenes in the wedding ceremony, just before Mordaunt’s cue, to give the daughter away. Aunt Tempe’s attitude has analogues elsewhere in *In Old Plantation Days*: the sharp tongues of Martha in “The Memory of Martha,” Aunt Fanny in “The Brief Cure of Aunt Fanny,” Anna Maria in “The Way of a Woman,” as well as Maria Ann Gibbs and Lucindy Woodyard in “The Defection of Maria Ann Gibbs” are notable examples.

To characterize Aunt Tempe as merely troublesome would be premature, however. Her character is more subtle than one might expect. “Aunt Tempe’s Revenge” shows Aunt Tempe’s more considerate and emotional side. Contrary to the expectations of Mordaunt and probably even the reader of this story, she tries to convince her master to buy Tom, the son of her estranged husband who has abandoned her for another woman living at a nearby plantation, so that a young woman on the

Mordaunt plantation can marry him. Aunt Tempe implores Mordaunt to ignore his own policy of forbidding his slaves to marry slaves residing on other plantations. (Mordaunt denounces the slave trade.) In the end his conscience convinces him to do precisely this. Mordaunt hands Aunt Tempe the money to forward to a slave trader for the acquisition of Tom.

The other black women of *In Old Plantation Days*, mentioned above, are comparably multidimensional. Martha inspires her husband, Ben, to play the banjo in order to sustain her before she dies. After her death she lives on in Ben's mind until he conjures up her memory by playing the banjo for old times' sake. Aunt Fanny, initially bitter and resentful at aging and relinquishing to an upstart her role as head cook on the plantation, becomes a pathetic figure slowly losing the fight against rheumatism and debilitating illnesses. Anna Maria ultimately agrees to marry her lover, Gabe, but only after her repeated rejections urge him to improve his interpersonal and verbal skills. Finally, Maria Ann Gibbs and Lucindy Woodyard have historically competed for the hearts and minds of a church congregation, but their public tussle in a fundraising challenge further undermines their relationship and concludes with Maria's defection from the church.

As serious as these stories might seem, Dunbar threads them with wonderful humor. One of the funnier stories is "A Lady Slipper." Dely saves her mistress, Emily, from the embarrassment and the sense of betrayal inherent in explaining to Robert, a man courting her, that she has encouraged another "oft-rejected lover," Nelson, to grovel in the dirt in order to win the right to own her sexy slipper. Dely persuades Robert's gullible and reckless younger brother to steal this slipper back for "luck cakes" (they provide long-lasting luck if eaten). In another story, "The Trouble about Sophiny," Sophiny strings along a coachman and a butler who desire to escort her to the great ball. Eventually and unfortunately, she tells them, after they have needlessly boxed each other into aches and pains, that she has already agreed to go with a field hand.

Aside from portraying the wit, savvy, and humor of black women, *In Old Plantation Days* also pays great attention to folk religion and the black church. Religious society in the slave quarters, we learn, tends to exhibit the kind of problems found in any society, including envy and sin. In "The Walls of Jericho," Reverend Parker is distressed to watch the members of his congregation trickle out to attend the church of a rival preacher, Reverend Johnson, who revels in and stokes Parker's jealousy. Only after what seems like the divine intervention of an earthquake—which is really Parker's young masters sneaking through nearby woodland and cutting down trees to cause a disturbance—does the congregation deem Johnson's leadership questionable and return to Parker's church.

Parker, like Mordaunt, makes cameo appearances in other stories. In many of the stories he is about eighty years of age, but in one story, "How Brother Parker Fell from Grace," he is as young as twenty-eight and as imperfect as any other person on the plantation. Parker is a talented preacher, yet also a young man full of such egotism and pride that he commits the sin of playing cards when challenged. The shame he experiences afterward almost paralyzes his will to return to the

pulpit. However, the encouragement he receives from, of all people, his master, Mordaunt, illustrates two things. First, it emphasizes the theme of religious self-redemption pervading *In Old Plantation Days*, a divergence from the more critical stance on religion that Dunbar takes in, say, *The Strength of Gideon*. Second, it reiterates the supportive relationship possible between whites and religious slaves. (In “The Walls of Jericho,” Reverend Johnson, a “free negro,” receives the permission needed to hold meetings next to the Mordaunt estate.)

Dunbar’s imagination of the bond between masters and slaves contrasts with the history of masters being resistant to slave religion. Christianity in particular bolstered African American social and spiritual networks, and as early as the late eighteenth century it had proven philosophically incompatible with the principles of enslavement.²⁴ Thus the collegiality between Mordaunt and Parker—and between other whites and blacks, masters and slaves, in *In Old Plantation Days*—subordinates this history of interracial tension to the possibilities of interracial conciliation. In this regard, Dunbar arguably plays into the hands of the plantation tradition. One could also maintain, however, that *In Old Plantation Days* differs from this tradition because such conciliation is not the end in itself. Upon heeding Mordaunt’s encouraging words, Reverend Parker returns to the pulpit to preach to the black faithful. The white man, in other words, serves black moral, religious, and political interests that reinforce communal networks within a peculiar institution predicated on tearing them down. The recurrence of this plot line, albeit under various narrative guises, encodes polemical subtexts within stories that seem to pander to contemporaneous and mostly white sensibilities of racism or racial prejudice.

Unsurprisingly, as in the case of Dunbar’s previous two collections of short stories, *In Old Plantation Days* sold well. Sales were especially brisk during the Christmas season of 1903 (Gentry, 102). Certain reviewers picked up on the optimistic theme of potential interracial peace. One critic characterized these as “good stories, such as tend to the encouragement of good feelings between races—black and white” (qtd. in Metcalf, 147). Others noticed the utter palatability of the stories. The collection, according to one critic, comprises “scenes from slavery in its least tragic aspect,” and this deviance from the historical record results in tales wherein “the tone of the narration is admirable” and “the humor unforced” (148). However, not all reviewers enjoyed the book. For one, the “picture of plantation life on the whole seems rather weak and superficial,” and *In Old Plantation Days* proves that Dunbar should stick to what he knows best: poetry.²⁵ Of course, despite his literary reputation as a poet, Dunbar continued to write, compile, and publish short stories—in fact, another sixteen for his final collection, *The Heart of Happy Hollow*.

The Heart of Happy Hollow was published in 1904 by Dodd, Mead and Company. As his correspondence from the period attests, Dunbar’s deteriorating health left him unable to deal with the rigors of prose writing except at very short sittings. His last novel, *The Sport of the Gods*, had come in 1902; between 1902 and his death, *In Old Plantation Days* and *The Heart of Happy Hollow* would be the only

prose he published in book form. However, *The Heart of Happy Hollow* was an important contribution to Dunbar's work in the short story. Leaving behind the pastoral setting that had dominated *In Old Plantation Days*, Dunbar focuses primarily on portraying African Americans in towns and cities. As he wrote in a draft of an undated letter to Edward H. Dodd of Dodd, Mead and Company, this collection would focus on the "modern Negro" and his "Tales of Little Africa."²⁶ Ostensibly his most complex collection for the ways in which it positions blacks as the inhabitants of traditionally white urban space, it is also more subdued in tone than either *Folks from Dixie* or *The Strength of Gideon*.

The collection contained mainly new material: of the sixteen stories, only one, "A Defender of the Faith," had been previously published. Compared to *The Strength of Gideon*, of which eight of the twenty stories had been previously published, and *In Old Plantation Days*, of which fifteen of the twenty-five stories had been previously published,²⁷ *The Heart of Happy Hollow* offered a new body of work and marked Dunbar's most explicit confrontation with the public conception of African Americans.

The collection's title may sound faintly reminiscent of Dunbar's previous plantation setting, but his foreword clearly suggests otherwise: "Happy Hollow; are you wondering where it is? Wherever Negroes colonise [*sic*] in the cities or villages, north or south." In "Happy Hollow," Dunbar imagines a postbellum world in which the folk past influences the development of black urban consciousness: "wherever the hod carrier, the porter, the waiter are the society men of the town; wherever the picnic and the excursion are the chief summer diversion, and the revival the winter time of repentance, wherever the cheese cloth veil obtains at a wedding, and the little white hearse goes by with blacks mourners in the one carriage behind, there—there—is Happy Hollow." For the most part, the book's characters are neither simply heroic, tragic, pathetic, nor humorous, but shaped by their circumstances in various ways. More restrained or subdued than Dunbar's previous collections of short stories, *The Heart of Happy Hollow* does not argue for black humanity but instead accepts it as a given and proceeds to an analysis of the nature and implications of black struggles with white racism. Humor is still used in the collection, but it is removed from the outright minstrel humor of black caricature. As well, Dunbar has inverted the focus of his previous collections. Rather than foregrounding mostly pastoral settings for his stories with a few selected deviations, the majority of the stories deal with larger town or urban settings that have their own distinctive and developed African American communities.²⁸

"The Scapegoat," the first story of the collection, chronicles the life of Mr. Robinson Asbury,²⁹ a black man whose lowly beginnings do not impede his upward climb in the town of Cadgers, and focuses on both class politics within the African American community as well as the white exploitation of blacks in general. Asbury's growing influence is exploited by white politicians in the town: "It was [Asbury's] wisdom rather more than his morality that made the party managers after a while cast their glances toward him as *a man who might be useful to their interests*. It would be well to have a man—a shrewd, powerful man—down in that

part of the town who could carry his people's vote in his vest pocket" (italics added). Asbury proves an apt choice; as his reputation continues to grow, the lower-class black community he lives in assumes that "he will move uptown," as after all, "that's the way with a coloured man when he gets a start." However, Asbury stays put, vowing to "never desert the people who have done so much to elevate me." When Asbury's political influence begins to threaten the "better class of Negroes—by that is meant those who were particularly envious of Asbury's success," he is labeled "an enemy to his race" by members of the "better class" for "catering" to the lower class. After the election, in which the white politicians Asbury works for are triumphant, the opposing side declares fraud, and Asbury is sacrificed by his own party to "give the people some tangible evidence of their own yearnings for purity." Asbury is found guilty and sentenced to a year in prison, but not before he reveals "the men behind the throne." When Asbury returns to Cadgers after his sentence, his previous allies, both black and white, assume that he is a crushed man. In the following election, however, Asbury turns the tables on those who had made him a scapegoat for their own ends, and "[n]ot one of the party that had damned Robinson Asbury was left in power."

"The Scapegoat" captures the complexity of the American political scene. Given the chance to succeed, Asbury negotiates his own compromise with the town's political networks by both taking their offerings and attempting to represent his constituents. Once stripped of the laurels of his position, however, Asbury still serves those he represents, galvanizing the black lower class to use its political power to address social wrongs. While critiquing the excesses of politically motivated self-interest, the story suggests that the class consciousness of both blacks and whites can conspire in the exploitation of lower-class blacks.

Another story from the collection, "The Mission of Mr. Scatters," plays with a similar theme, but offers a different outcome. In the Southern town of Miltonville,³⁰ a town that has a well-developed black society, a black confidence man, Mr. Scatters, pretends to be a Cuban national in charge of executing the last will of John Jackson, brother to Miltonville's Isaac Jackson. Scatters is caught in his attempt to bilk black citizens out of their money, but the white courts defer his punishment when he appeals to the vanity and cupidity of the Southern aristocracy. His defense, directed at the whites who make up the court, enacts the social and political power that whites have over blacks by blaming blacks for "their" own inequality: "Gentlemen, I maintain that instead of imprisoning you should thank me for what I have done. Have I not taught your community a lesson? Have I not put a check upon their credulity and made them wary of unheralded strangers?" Scatters successfully plays upon white Southern vanity, correctly gauging the machinations of white justice by appealing to, as he puts it, "men of mercy" to protect him from the "vindictiveness" of his black victims. Scatters's ploy has its intended effect: not only are the judge and jury suitably impressed, the narrative assessment of white sentiments posits that "Scatters had taught the darkies a lesson." Scatters, through his understanding of the operations of white power and privilege, exonerates himself at the expense of his black peers.

“Old Abe’s Conversion” differs from Dunbar’s previous approaches to religion in his short fiction. Here, the tensions between the old, rural-based folk versions of religion portrayed through emotional excess and a connection to the natural world, and the new, urban-based versions portrayed through education and public service, are presented through the relationship between a father, Abram Dixon, and his son, Robert Dixon. Robert’s desire to attend college for religious training is viewed by his father and the town of Danvers as “an attempt to force Providence. If Robert were called to preach, they said, he would be endowed with the power from on high, and no intervention of the schools was necessary.” However, the point is not to excoriate the past or glorify the present. As the narrator makes clear, Robert visits his parents “intending to avoid rather than combat [their] prejudices. There was no condescension in his thought of them and their ways. They were different; that was all. He had learned new ways. They had retained the old.” Rather, Dunbar portrays both sets of religious practices as serving the needs of their respective constituents. The generational shift in values associated with religious practice comes to a head when Robert stands in for his father at the pulpit. Robert maintains his composure in the face of Danvers’s collective scorn for his form of faith, and makes his father promise to visit him in the city. Abram’s experiences in the city allow him to better understand Robert’s different approach to religion, and he comes away feeling like a new convert. In the balance created between Robert and Abram, Dunbar portrays religion as more important than the struggle over the way faith is practiced. It is instead a union of the particular needs of the community with the guidance of faith required to develop true religious sentiments.

The Heart of Happy Hollow addresses serious political questions larger than those tackled in previous collections, but there are still stories designed to entertain readers. “A Matter of Doctrine” plays with the religious faith of the town’s black preacher, Rev. Jasper Hayward, who uses his position to gain his own ends. “The Race Question” is a dialect piece set at the racetrack that chronicles a preacher watching his son sin in the exact same ways that he did as a younger man. The only previously published story from the collection, “A Defender of the Faith,” is a Christmas story that has a white female newspaper reporter, Arabella Coe, sacrificing her scant savings to insure that a group of black youngsters keep their faith in Santa Claus. Dunbar presents Coe as a sympathetic character, but as with *Folks from Dixie*, he also casts barbs at her for being a reporter. Coe is, after all, in the black tenements looking for a suitable Christmas story to publish. When she overhears the children’s conversation concerning their dubious faith in Santa Claus, the narrator asserts, “It was not a very polite thing for Miss Coe to do, but then Miss Coe was a reporter and reporters are not scrupulous about being polite when there is anything to hear.” Coe compensates the children for the story she overhears—she literally pays for the local color she receives—with gifts that they otherwise could not have afforded. Finally, Dunbar obviously wrote “Cahoots” to entertain; indeed, it recalls the kind of stories characteristic of the plantation tradition of Anglo-American literature.

“Cahoots” does, however, allow Dunbar to segue into the two stories that deal with the rural South, “The Wisdom of Silence” and “The Lynching of Jube Benson.” Both stories undercut the authority of the pastoral even as they seem to conform to its conventions. “The Wisdom of Silence” portrays the efforts of Jeremiah Anderson to better his lot in the rural South. He buys land, works his way out of debt, and prospers. But when fire destroys his farm, he turns to Samuel Brabant, his former master, for financial assistance to begin again. Initially sounding rather Washingtonian in his seeming decree to “cast down your buckets where you are,” Dunbar depicts the series of miscommunications that led to the estranged relationship between Anderson and Brabant, as well as the inordinate amount of pride that Anderson takes in his own accomplishments. The ultimate reconciliation between the two indicates not only the danger of pride, but also the necessity of productive interactions between whites and blacks. As in “Nelse Hatton’s Vengeance” from *The Folks from Dixie*, Dunbar makes the point that such interactions, while humbling to both sides, will ultimately lead to better relations between the two races.

“The Lynching of Jube Benson”³¹ is Dunbar’s most provocative story dealing with the influence of pastoral norms on the lives of African Americans. The story is told by a white narrator, Dr. Melville, who recounts his participation in the lynching of an innocent black man. In presenting Melville’s complicity with the stereotypical beliefs that dictate black and white relationships, Dunbar exposes how and why these norms generate violence against blacks. The story’s pastoral setting no longer authorizes the iconography and implications of black bodies; instead, it ascribes stereotypes to whites, as evidenced by Melville’s recognition of his own animalistic behavior. The ringing of “Blood guilty!” in Melville’s ears at the story’s conclusion places the responsibility for refiguring racial reasoning in the hands of whites.

“The Lynching of Jube Benson” also participates in Dunbar’s ongoing critique of the negative ways blacks are portrayed in the media. Dr. Melville observes that the lynching “was very quiet and orderly. There was no doubt that it was as the papers would have said, a gathering of the best citizens.” Melville’s original understanding of blacks, presented as a mix of “tradition” and a “false education” in the previous paragraph, highlights the learned social values that led him and his fellow citizens to act as they did. His wry connection between the events that occurred and the way that the press would have presented them foregrounds his own complicity in the events that lead up to Jube’s death, inverting the meaning of his actual comments: the “best citizens” have become the very creatures they accused blacks of being. Melville’s belated feelings of guilt and his recognition of his culpability are further complicated by the presence of Handon Gay, “the ambitious young reporter” who surreptitiously records the story for his own use without Melville’s awareness. While one of the characters in the story understands the larger cost of racialized thinking, the other continues to exploit violence against blacks as a form of entertainment.

The critical assessments of *The Heart of Happy Hollow* were mixed. Positive reviews include the *Boston Journal*’s opinion that “Mr. Dunbar has written noth-

ing better than this volume” and the *Detroit Free Press*’s belief that “[i]f these stories go for anything it is to show that the same heart beats in man’s breast whether his skin is black or white.” These two reviews commend Dunbar’s collection as his best work, the second going so far as to gesture to the overriding humanity portrayed in the stories. Negative or less encouraging reviews include the *Cleveland Leader*’s remark that Dunbar “keeps to his own people whose nature he knows so well” (rpt. in Metcalf, 148–49).³² Another is the assertion of the *New York Times*: “Just in proportion as the stories stick to the negro and the negro quarter they are good stories” (916). The first review echoes the sentiments of previous reviews of Dunbar’s novels, in which Dunbar is gently reminded to remain in “his own province” (Colbron, 338). The second builds upon these reactions by drawing overly fine lines in Dunbar’s collection. All of the stories deal with black characters, but the white narrative voices in stories like “The Lynching of Jube Benson” appear to these reviewers as inappropriate. As the reviewer asserts, “The author puts the story in the mouth of one of the participators in the imagined lynching, but it [. . .] bears no relationship to the real facts in a horrible business.” Instead, the reviewer’s main interest is in highlighting the stories that contain an image of the “real negro,” stories like “The Race Question,” which narrates the “monologue of an old darky” and presents how “all negroes over thirty-five are apt to be in the South,” and “One Christmas at Shiloh,” which portrays “negroes exactly as they are.” Stories such as “The Scapegoat” and “The Mission of Mr. Scatters” are further criticized for their aesthetic deficiencies when they do not fulfill the traditional Southern roles expected of blacks. Taken together, these reviews communally narrate the tensions that Dunbar faced as an author who was looking for the acceptance and recognition of his artistic vision while being further reminded of the conventional role he was expected to fulfill.

III

The second section of the collection, devoted to Dunbar’s uncollected stories, offers an uneven mix of literary skill. Containing both his earliest forays into fiction writing and some of his later and more interesting experimentations with the short story form, the uncollected stories highlight the distance that Dunbar traveled in his short but productive career. More important, they provide a better historical context for understanding the development of Dunbar’s struggles with the publishing industry, specifically as it affected his ability to produce work that was rewarding both financially and artistically.

The section begins with a series of four stories published in the *New York Journal and Advertiser* from September 26 to October 17, 1897, which the newspaper billed as a “Notable Series of Negro Dialect Stories by the Greatest Writer the Colored Race Has Ever Produced.” The representational limitations suggested by the description belie the complexity of the stories, which mark Dunbar’s earliest attempts at presenting African Americans in an urban context. At times the

stories uncritically pander to racial stereotypes, but at others they productively shift African American characters from the rural South to the urban North. Characters long to leave the South, but also desire to return after experiencing life in the urban North, as in the story “Buss Jinkins Up Nawth.” The other stories feature different types of black trickster figures, some of whom, like John Jackson in “Yellowjack’s Game of Craps,” conform to racial caricatures of blacks, while others more closely resemble George Johnson in “How George Johnson ‘Won Out,’” who merely uses his wiles to get the girl.

Further complicating the stories are the personal comments that passed between Dunbar and Alice Ruth Moore while the series was being published.³³ Dunbar revealed his own disdain for the stories, highlighting the financial interest that drove him to produce them. As he writes to Moore on September 26, 1897, “If you look in today’s *Journal* you will see and [disap]prove of the first of my Tenderloin stories, but go on disapproving dear, I am getting money for it that means help toward a cozy nest for my singing bird” (195–96). Moore is less forgiving of the artistic prostitution his work reproduces. On October 21, 1897, she replies:

don’t, don’t write any more such truck as you’ve been putting in the *Journal*. Now this is between us as between husband and wife. To everyone else I champion your taste, even to Sallie. I argue from all sorts of premises your right to do as you please—but to you darling, I must say—*don’t*. I know it means money and a speedier union for us, but sometimes money isn’t all. It is not fair to prostitute your art for “filthy lucre,” is it? I shall be glad when the sixth story comes out.³⁴ It will be such a relief, for every Sunday I find myself asking “what next.” (216)

Moore urges Dunbar to maintain his artistic integrity, even as Dunbar is aware that she will not approve of the stories that he has created. This tension highlights the complex array of forces that Dunbar faced as an artist. As Dunbar responded to Moore on October 24, 1897: “So you see we must marry soon even if I have to write trash for the *Journal* in order to do it” (221).

The *New York Journal and Advertiser* stories provide insight into the compromises required to succeed as an African American author at the turn of the twentieth century. When juxtaposed with his personal correspondence, they trace Dunbar’s negotiations of the literary marketplace, his learning of the ropes in a world that had particular views about the role of blacks in the publishing world. Dunbar’s personal and professional interests troubled his ability to produce fiction that effectively dealt with the American racial scene; the social and cultural values held by Gilded Age America further circumscribed and complicated this process. Dunbar was expected to conform to the accepted literary norms in ways that did not affect white authors, at least if he wanted to remain in the good graces of editors and his reading public. Understanding Dunbar’s specific negotiation of the literary marketplace requires that we pay attention to the external factors that influenced his work—his failures as well as his successes—when assessing his position in American literary history.

The second group of stories marks Dunbar's turn to local color fiction without the protocols of racial realism. From August until December 1901, Dunbar published a series entitled "Ohio Pastorals" in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine: A Popular Journal of General Literature, Science, and Politics*. From May 1898 until March 1905, *Lippincott's* was one of Dunbar's magazines of choice. During this period he published twelve poems, eleven short stories, and two novels in the magazine.³⁵ A reputable periodical established in 1868, based in Philadelphia, and published by J. B. Lippincott Company, *Lippincott's* featured authors ranging from Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle to Anna Katherine Green and Stephen Crane (Mott, 400).³⁶ Alongside such fin-de-siècle British and American figures, Dunbar was the sole African American writer whom the magazine welcomed as a frequent literary contributor (Brawley, vii; Mott, 400). The reasons were simple: Not only was Dunbar prolific, he was achieving great milestones for African American writers. Dunbar was, quite simply, the most successful African American literary artist the nation had ever seen.³⁷ Reveling in this idea, *Lippincott's* tended to publish Dunbar's fiction with headlines of his previous two or three works, in some instances mentioning that a particular work had appeared in the magazine itself.

However, Dunbar's contributions to *Lippincott's* remain marginal in Dunbar criticism and African American literary criticism in general.³⁸ A few facts might begin to shed light on this situation. The twelve poems Dunbar printed in *Lippincott's* between November 1900 and November 1905 range from the lyric to narrative verse; touch on such themes as love and sorrow, nature and spirituality; and adopt classical rhyme schemes. But these poems were hardly ever in black dialect. Reminiscent of British Romantic and Victorian literature, these poems were published in spite and because of Dunbar's status as "Poet Laureate of the Negro Race" or "Robert Burns of Negro Poetry" (Revell, 164, 166). These names, which hail Dunbar as a writer of authentic "black" dialect literature, belie the fact that only 30 percent of the poems in Dunbar's first three books of poetry were verses in dialect—and not even all *black* dialect, for that matter—while the rest were poems in formal English.³⁹

Most American critics panned this imbalance. Since black dialect and plantation imagery determined the commercialism of African American writing at the time, critics tended to praise this part of Dunbar's early poetic work and dismiss the rest. Dunbar, however, defied the expectation that he should produce only literature of black dialect. He wrote texts avoiding not only black dialect and plantation imagery but also conventional African American characters, settings, and vernacular in general. Along with his Romantic and Victorian poetry, for example, Dunbar's first three novels—*The Uncalled*, *The Love of Landry*, and *The Fanatics*—feature racially unmarked, neutral, or white protagonists, while assuming the traditional forms of local color, realism, and/or naturalism. The contemporary dismissal of these works as well as this kind of work persuaded Dunbar to publish books in the plantation tradition for financial security.⁴⁰ Yet for a certainly lesser sum, he mostly avoided the plantation tradition in *Lippincott's*. The Philadelphia

magazine, according to one *Nation* reporter in 1873, fostered “comparative freedom from staleness and familiar routine” (qtd. in Mott, 399). For Dunbar, in the last few years before his death, the magazine likewise represented one of the few and last places where he could write on his own terms.

Written by Dunbar at the request of the editor of *Lippincott's* (Cunningham, 222), the “Ohio Pastorals” series includes five short stories that appeared in consecutive months from August to December in 1901: “The Mortification of the Flesh,” “The Independence of Silas Bollender,” “The White Counterpane,” “The Minority Committee,” and “The Visiting of Mother Danbury.” Dunbar identifies neither the characters nor the settings of the stories in explicit racial terms. Rather, “Ohio Pastorals” are wonderful local color narratives about an Ohio village, featuring characters that Dunbar had included in other stories he had published in *Lippincott's*. The first two stories focus on two friends who reside in a small Ohio town and grapple with the politics of marriage, powerful women, male individualism, and provincialism. The third concerns a mother’s attempts to cope with the potential loss of the son she struggled to raise and support to a woman ironically similar to her in strength and will. The fourth deals with the generational conflict between older and younger townfolk over whether to purchase an organ to modernize hymnal accompaniment for church service. And the fifth story concentrates on two grandmothers disagreeing over how to care for their grandchild, who eventually dies of an illness. Several protagonists make cameo appearances in these five stories, creating a sense of narrative continuity despite the actual serial format. As a whole, the magazine stories potentially form the basis of a short story collection in the Ohioan local color tradition of his first novel, also first released in the magazine, *The Uncalled*.

As a native Ohioan writing about Ohio in his *Lippincott's* fiction, Dunbar could have earned critical acclaim for his regional authenticity. After all, the regional origin and experiences of authors had then determined the exactitude, the credibility, and the aesthetic worth of their local color literature.⁴¹ Yet his *Lippincott's* writing attracted little attention in the early 1900s; scholarly silence still envelops this work today.

The rest of the uncollected stories offer a structure as uneven as that of these first two groups of stories. Of the remainder, the first four are from the *Dayton Tattler*, a newspaper Dunbar edited during high school (1890) that was designed to cater to the interests of the black community. The stories themselves are rather pedestrian, focusing on mainly humorous incidents. The next two play on the general fascination with the West and Manifest Destiny in the American imagination. These initial publications are among Dunbar’s earliest attempts to learn the unwritten rules of the publishing world. In all of them, race is conspicuously absent. While at times clunky and formulaic, they do present a writer learning his craft. Like the “Ohio Pastoral” series, ten of the final fifteen stories, written after he had better developed his skills, also use racially unmarked characters. Several, in fact, use the same set of characters, further developing the setting initially created for *Lippincott's*.

In some of the other uncollected stories, Dunbar develops certain themes that recur in his later works, such as the implications of cultural and class differences, the politics of gender, and the significance of religion. “Jimmy Weedon’s Contretemps” features a young New York socialite who has a “predilection for low life,” but unlike his fiancée, Helen, Jimmy was “honest in his motives for slumming”: “Never for an instant did he soothe his conscience or excuse his tastes, by thinking that he was searching for types or studying conditions.” By comparison, Helen and her friends tour the “amusement places of the lower classes” in order to confirm the debased nature of its inhabitants. Just as one of Helen’s friends, during the tour, observes that “[o]ne couldn’t conceive of a person in our class enjoying this,” Jimmy appears dancing, effectively ending his engagement with Helen as well as her group’s smug sense of composure. The story thus concludes with a deprecation of upper-class pretensions.⁴²

In another story, Dunbar probes the gender politics of the African American community. “The Emancipation of Evalina Jones” is a “Little Africa” tale that features a strong female character who turns the tables on her derisive husband. Jim, her husband, forces Evalina to stay home and work during Emancipation Day celebrations so that he can go out with another woman. Ultimately, Jim’s actions push Evalina too far. Evalina’s final declaration in the story, “This is the fust ’Mancipation Day I’ve had since I ma’ied you, but I want you to know I’ve stood all I’ve goin’ to stan’ f’om you, an’ evah day’s goin’ to be ’Mancipation Day aftah this,” links the postbellum problem of women’s equality with the antebellum issue of slavery. After all, Evalina’s marriage has not allowed her to enjoy the benefits of the annual Emancipation Day celebration. In making this connection, Dunbar points out that freedom must be experienced by both men and women to have any real meaning..

In “Lafe Halloway’s Two Fights” Dunbar connects religious faith to personal triumph. Lafe’s conversion to the church is threatened when Tom Randall, a moral backslider who tries to drag others down with him, taunts Lafe into a fight by insulting his girlfriend, Alice Staniland. Tom’s actions mortify Lafe, especially after a church elder witnesses the conflict. Rather than shrink from his vows to the church, Lafe admits the error of his ways, apologizes to Randall, and asks his church for forgiveness. This second fight—an internal, spiritual, and moral fight—allows Lafe to overcome the circumstances that initially portended his downfall.

Understanding Dunbar’s careful packaging of the different literary strategies in his short story collections gives us better insight into his negotiation of the social, cultural, and racial-political boundaries that African American authors of his period faced. Specifically, through literature he critiqued the “coon-era” culture of caricature that infringed on African American claims to racial uplift (Wonham, 55). In stories that took political risks, Dunbar articulated the social and racial limitations that existed for African Americans, while developing multidimensional and positive portrayals of African Americans in order to revise the literary norms of racial representation. The thematic diversity of Dunbar’s short fiction goes beyond the scope and range of most other writers, black and white, at the turn of

the twentieth century. While at certain times he may have pandered to mainstream literary interests, at others his short stories succinctly exposed and explored the complexities of American racial politics. Dunbar's short fiction enables us to rethink and appreciate the nature and legacy of his contributions to African American literature and American literature in general.

Notes

1. James Weldon Johnson argues in his preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922) that Dunbar's dialect poems tended to assign the stereotypical temperaments of "humor" and "pathos" to African Americans (41). Thomas Millard Henry in "Old School of Negro 'Critics' Hard on Paul Laurence Dunbar" (1924), disagrees with Johnson by criticizing the African American writers of *The Crisis*—Johnson, William Stanley Braithwaite, and W. E. B. Du Bois—for failing to accord Dunbar the respect he deserves. For summaries of arguments for why Dunbar was progressive or retrograde in the African American poetic tradition, see Braxton, xxix; Jones, 185; Simon, 118; Story, 54; Nettels, 83–85; and Revell, 162–75.

2. The four collections have been reprinted previously; in particular, several reprints marked the renewed scholarly interest in Dunbar during the late 1960s and early 1970s, approximately a century after his birth. *Folks from Dixie* was reprinted in 1902 (London: H. R. Allenson), 1968 (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Gregg Press), and 1969 (New York: Negro Universities Press; Miami, FL: Mnemosyne Publishing Inc.; New York: New American Library; Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press). *The Strength of Gideon* was reprinted in 1969 (New York: Arno Press; Miami, FL: Mnemosyne Publishing Inc.) and 1970 (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press). *In Old Plantation Days* was reprinted in 1969 (New York: Negro Universities Press). And *The Heart of Happy Hollow* was reprinted in 1969 (New York: Negro Universities Press) and 1970 (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press). The papers published in Martin, ed., *A Singer in the Dawn* represent lectures delivered during the Centenary Conference celebrating the life and work of Dunbar (13).

3. Listed in order of first publication, these thirty-one stories appeared individually in editions of *Werner's Readings and Recitations* and in such periodicals as *Dayton (Ohio) Tattler, Independent, New York Journal and Advertiser, Cosmopolitan, Outlook, Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, Current Literature, Saturday Evening Post, New England Magazine, New York Evening Post, The People's Monthly, San Francisco Post, Boston Beacon, Smart Set, Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph, Metropolitan Magazine, San Francisco Chronicle, St. Louis Mirror, and Era*.

4. See Wiggins; Brawley, *The Best Stories*; J. Martin and Hudson; as well as H. Martin and Primeau.

5. Not included in this number are the references to several additional stories that are found in Dunbar's correspondence. For example, in a September 13, 1892, letter to the C. C. Hunt American Press Association, Dunbar asks for the return of a story titled "Race for Revenge" (*The Life and Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, roll 3, Paul Laurence Dunbar Section of the Schomburg Calendar of Manuscripts, Dunbar 2); a note on the back of a letter lists the following stories as returned: "A Monologue," "The Party," and "The Haunted Plantation," as well as two undecipherable titles (the same list also included "Ole Conjurin' [Conju'in] Joe," a story found in manuscript form in the University of Dayton Rare Books Collection and published for the first time in Herbert Woodward Martin and Ronald Primeau's *In His Own Voice*) (Dunbar, *The Paul Laurence Dunbar Papers*, roll 1, frame 183); and finally, a February 20, 1900, letter from *The Writer: A Monthly Magazine for Literary Workers* that discusses a story that deals with "the central idea [. . .] of having the devil in the form of a fascinating young woman tempt an impecunious young man" (roll 1, frame 402). In addition, there are several fragments of stories in both manuscript and handwritten form on roll 4 of *The Paul Laurence Dunbar Papers*, including such titles as "A Detective Story," "Dialogue Between Four Friends," "A Man Named Ben Adams," "Murder Story," and "Reginald Vere." The recent publication of "Ole Conju'in Joe"

(2002) by Martin and Primeau points to the possibility that more of Dunbar's short stories remain to be rediscovered.

6. Colbron connects Dunbar's race and his aesthetic abilities elsewhere in the review as well. Earlier she states that *The Uncalled* "is an earnest work worthy of being taken seriously, and yet in the reading of it there are moments when we do well to remember the difficulties of race and environment with which the author had to struggle. We recognise [*sic*] then, that what for another would be but mediocrity may be credited as an achievement to Mr. Dunbar" (338). She further expounds on the "race characteristics" needed to succeed when she states "[t]he Anglo-Saxon race is more inclined to the narration of impersonal outward fact and action, than to the analyzing of mental torment" (339). Just in case readers miss the point that Colbron is making in the review, one of Dunbar's dialect poems, "Christmas is A-Comin'," appears right below the review, reinforcing Dunbar's supposedly correct role in "representing" race.

7. See "The Colonel's Awakening," "Mt. Pisgah's Christmas 'Possum," "Aunt Tempe's Revenge," "How Brother Parker Fell from Grace," and "Cahoots."

8. See "The Intervention of Peter," "The Last Fiddling of Mordaunt's Jim," "The Stanton Coachman," and "Who Stand for the Gods."

9. See "The Finish of Patsy Barnes," "A Mess of Pottage," "A Judgment of Paris," "Silent Sam'el," and "The Promoter."

10. Stories set in New York include "Jimsella," "An Old-Time Christmas," "The Faith Cure Man," and "The Trustfulness of Polly"; stories set in Washington, D.C., include "Mr. Cornelius Johnson, Office-Seeker," "The Boy and the Bayonet," and "The Finding of Martha." One of Dunbar's earliest attempts at presenting African Americans as part of the local color space of the city is seen in a series of four stories he published in the *New York Journal and Advertiser* from September 26 to October 17, 1897. While these stories do pander to racial stereotypes, at the same time they shift the African American characters in them from the rural South to the urban North. Other urban stories include "The Ordeal at Mt. Hope," "Nelse Hatton's Vengeance," "A Council of State," and "The Scapegoat."

11. For additional commentary on the ways that Dunbar's short stories offer an in-depth analysis of American social space, see the "Introduction to the Short Stories" in *The Paul Laurence Dunbar Reader*, edited by Jay Martin and Gossie H. Hudson, 63–66.

12. The plantation tradition referred mostly to the popular literature produced by Anglo-American Southerners, including the poetry of Thomas Dunn English, the brothers Sidney and Clifford Lanier, and Irwin Russell; the novels of George Tucker, James Ewell Heath, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Francis Hopkinson Smith, and Mark Twain; and the shorter fiction of John Esten Cooke, John Pendleton Kennedy, William Gilmore Simms, and most notably Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page. While these works are not entirely homogeneous, Blight suggests that their plot constructions, characterizations, settings, symbolism, and themes consistently romanticize the plantation societies and cultures of the Old South to communicate and alleviate national anxieties over sectional reunion between the South and the North. For general discussions of the imagery of the plantation tradition, see F. Gaines, S. Brown, Mixon, Wagner, Tracy, and Blight.

13. See "A Family Feud," "The Lynching of Jube Benson," "At Shaft 11," and "The Tragedy at Three Forks."

14. See "A Mess of Pottage," "Mr. Cornelius Johnson, Office-Seeker," "One Man's Fortune," "A Council of State," and "The Scapegoat."

15. This is another example of the critical repetition of "identical words" that Dunbar continued to negotiate in the literary realm.

16. Dunbar's initial forays into the short story form will be discussed in section III of the introduction.

17. For the comparison of sales between *Folks from Dixie* and *The Uncalled*, see Cunningham, 191. For the contrast in the reviews between *The Strength of Gideon* and *The Love of Landry*, see Metcalf, 136–40.

18. One has only to turn to Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1901) for the story of slaves who preferred to stay on the plantation rather than enjoy emancipation.

19. Dunbar viewed the world through racial uplift ideology. As early as 1890, at the age of eighteen and as the only African American student at Dayton's Central High School, he published an editorial in the *Dayton Tattler* (December 13, 1890) pleading with local African American readers to subscribe to that newspaper, which would keep them abreast of the progress of African American communities in Dayton, in the state of Ohio, and in other regions of the United States. Essays Dunbar wrote later in life in this same vein include "Of Negro Journals" (1894), "England as Seen by a Black Man" (1897), "Recession Never" (1898), and "The Negroes of the Tenderloin: Paul Laurence Dunbar Sees Peril for His Race in Life in the City" (1898) (rpt. in J. Martin and Hudson).

20. For examples of such deprecations, see Brawley, 96, 104; Revell, 108, 113; and the remarkable silence around Dunbar's short stories in J. Martin, *A Singer in the Dawn*.

21. The four reviews employing the language of "humor and pathos" include those in the *New York Times* (March 10, 1900), the *Washington (D.C.) Post* (May 14, 1900), the *Louisville Christian Observer* (June 13, 1900), and the *Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Republican* (June 23, 1900). The three excerpted reviews belong to the *Philadelphia Times* (May 19, 1900), the *New York Commercial Advertiser* (June 1, 1900), and the *Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Republican* (June 23, 1900).

22. For the critique of the role of religion in the black community, see "The Fruitful Sleeping of the Rev. Elisha Edwards," "Jim's Probation," "The Strength of Gideon," "Uncle Simon's Sundays Out," and "A Mess of Pottage." For an exemplary analysis of the crisis whites faced on the issue of slavery, see "The Ingrate."

23. For the best stories about interactions between and among masters and slaves, see "A Supper by Proxy," "The Trouble about Sophiny," and "Mr. Groby's Slippery Gift." For conjure, see "The Conjuring Contest," "Dandy Jim's Conjure Scare," and "The Brief Cure of Aunt Fanny." For the power of music, see "The Last Fiddling of Mordaunt's Jim" and "The Memory of Martha."

24. For more information about the incompatibility of Christianity and slavery, see Raboteau, 290–318.

25. Respectively, the three reviews come from the *New York Times* (October 31, 1903), the *Nation*, February 18, 1904, 134, and the *Critic* 44 (May 1904): 476.

26. Quoted from the notebooks kept by Dunbar's secretary, in *The Paul Laurence Dunbar Papers*, roll 1, frame 805.

27. See Metcalf, 77–80.

28. Of the sixteen stories, only three, "Cahoots," "The Wisdom of Silence," and "The Lynching of Jube Benson," deal with what can be considered "pastoral" settings, and of these three, only "Cahoots" leaves the pastoral framing intact at the end of the story.

29. Of particular interest is Dunbar's emphasis of "Mr." in Asbury's title; he is not the traditional lowly servant figure, but one who has claim to his designation.

30. Miltonville is the home of Mr. Dunkin from "The Deliberation of Mr. Dunkin" in *Folks from Dixie*.

31. For an excellent reading of Dunbar's manipulation of narrative masking in "The Lynching of Jube Benson," see Gavin Jones's chapter on Dunbar, "Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Authentic Black Voice," in *Strange Talk*.

32. The reviews making these observations are from the *Detroit Free Press* (December 11, 1904), the *Boston Journal* (December 13, 1904), and the *Cleveland Leader* (December 4, 1904).

33. At this point, Paul and Alice were not yet married; in fact, part of Dunbar's motivation for writing these stories was to obtain enough money so that he could marry Alice. See Metcalf's "The Letters of Paul and Alice: A Private History."

34. To the best of our knowledge, only four of these stories were published.

35. The twelve poems are "The Tryst" (November 1900): 772; "To a Captious Critic" (October 1901): 493; "A Roadway" (January 1902): 114; "Differences" (March 1902): 325; "Lyrics of Love and Sorrow" (December 1902): 732; "Summer in the South" (September 1903): 378; "Forever" (June 1904): 670; "The Farm Child's Lullaby" (August 1904): 201; "Twilight" (October 1904): 497; "Compensation" (December 1904): 786; "Rain-Songs" (February 1905): 214; and "Day" (November 1905): 629. The eleven short stories are "The End of the Chapter" (April 1899): 532–34; "The Strength of Gideon" (October 1899); the five stories of "Ohio Pastorals"

(August–December 1901); “The Finding of Martha” (March 1902): 375–84; “The Vindication of Jared Hargot” (March 1904): 374–81; “The Way of Love” (January 1905): 68–73; and “The Churching of Grandma Pleasant” (March 1905): 337–42. The two novels are *The Uncalled* (May 1898): 579–669 and *The Sport of the Gods* (May 1901): 515–94.

36. For more information about the establishment of *Lippincott’s* in the late nineteenth century, see Mott, 396–401.

37. According to biographer Virginia Cunningham, Dunbar’s third book of poems, *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1896), made him the first African American to earn cash advances (four hundred dollars) and royalties (almost 18 percent) from a major publisher (Dodd, Mead, and Company) (153).

38. According to Kallenbach, 32–33, and our own research, three of Dunbar’s twelve *Lippincott’s* poems have been reprinted in anthologies of African American literature since 1924. Of the *Lippincott’s* short stories, “The Strength of Gideon” was reprinted in Dunbar’s *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories* (1900), while “The Finding of Martha” reappeared in *In Old Plantation Days* (1903). The first “Ohio Pastorals” story, “The Mortification of the Flesh,” has been reprinted in Turner (1969, 1970). The two *Lippincott’s* novels, *The Uncalled* and *The Sport of the Gods*, have been reprinted as books in 1898 and 1902, respectively, and a few times thereafter with his other novels. Aside from Brawley’s allusion to “Ohio Pastorals” in his introduction to *The Best Short Stories of Paul Laurence Dunbar* (1938), in which he dismisses the stories as without “racial interest” (vi–vii), no scholarly work has yet examined Dunbar’s *Lippincott’s* oeuvre as a single body of work.

39. In the wake of Howells’s review of Dunbar’s *Majors and Minors*, Dunbar ascended to the throne of “Poet Laureate of the Negro Race,” or “the Robert Burns of Negro Poetry,” the latter name referring to the great late-eighteenth-century Scottish dialect poet with whom Howells compared Dunbar in the review. Various critics and artists, black and white, employed these terms either appreciatively or disparagingly.

40. Books written for financial gain include his books of short stories, as well as such poetry collections as *Poems of Cabin and Field* (1899), *Candle-Lightin’ Time* (1901), *Chris’mus Is A-Comin’ and Other Poems* (1905), *Howdy, Honey, Howdy* (1905), *A Plantation Portrait* (1905), and *Joggin’ Erlong* (1906).

41. In their classic anthology of the genre, *American Local Color Stories*, editors Harry R. Warfel and G. Harrison Orians introduce the aesthetic contingency of local colorism on regional authenticity: “Merit depends upon an author’s knowledge, insight, and artistry” (x). Warfel and Orians reiterate the long-standing definitions of local colorism established in early nineteenth-century France (“*la couleur locale*”) and refashioned toward the end of the century by such American authors as James Lane Allen and Hamlin Garland.

42. See also H. Martin and Primeau’s comments on this story in *In His Own Voice*, 218–19.